



Separation and Sanctity: Parshiot Acharei Mot/Kedoshim

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

The verse in *Kedoshim* tells us that the Jewish nation is separate and different from other nations and sanctified unto God. "You shall be holy for Me, for I Hashem am holy; and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine." Rashi explains the phrase "to be Mine." Simply, Bnei Yisrael, you will be Mine. Secondly, the separation will make you Mine. Rashi notes, if you will not be Mine, you will belong to Nevuchadnetzar and his cohorts. What does that mean? Rashi continues and cites Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah who says that a Jew can say that theoretically he could eat pig, but he refrains because Hashem, our Father in heaven, so commanded us as a means of separating from the other nations.

We can develop our relationship with Hashem in two ways, out of fear and out of love. We can obey Hashem's will and be His nation out of the fear of consequences or through love, by choosing our behaviors according to His will. Nevertheless, the questions remain, why do we need to achieve such sanctity? Why the need for separation? And how do we accomplish the separation that will lead to this goal?

Rav Hirsh explains that the purpose and mission of Bnei Yisrael is to bring knowledge of God to the people of the world. To do so, those people must see that the Jews' existence is based solely on God's will. Therefore, Bnei Yisrael cannot rely on wealth, military prowess or political strategy. They must remain separate if they are to convey this message to the world. They came into existence in a unique way and must continue to exist unnaturally. We are here not as a rejection of other nations but as a service to them. As such, we cannot assimilate but must remain distinct.

The laws of the Torah guard us. As Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan writes, we are like the captain of the ship of the world with special obligations. The others are chefs and passengers with their own obligations. Therefore, our daily lives should differ from the ways of the rest of the world in a way that sanctifies us, writes Rabbi S. Grosbard. As Rabbi G. Schorr writes, every physical act should remind us of our Source and our mission so that our physical existence becomes elevated. Then, through pride in our separateness and our service to Hashem, we can bring others closer to Hashem.

Rabbi M. Scheinerman quotes the Beit Halevi that if we don't create the *kiddush*, sanctification, by distinguishing ourselves through living Torah lives, the world will enforce a *havdalah*, a more painful separation between Bnei Yisrael and the other nations. This is perhaps what Rashi alludes to, writes the Taam Vodaat, for it was Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed our first *Beit Hamikdash* when we left God's ways.

When Hashem offered us the Torah, we accepted it and we understood we would separate ourselves from the rest of the world. Why then, Rabbi Sternbuch asks, was it necessary to hold a mountain over our heads? The Maharal explains that there is a difference between desire and obligation. True, we willingly accepted the Torah after Hashem redeemed us from Egypt, but our desire might fade with time. Hashem wanted us to understand that even when our desire would wane, we would still need to observe the commandments and keep ourselves separate from the surrounding nations.

When Hashem separated us from the other nations, He simultaneously gave us the responsibility to maintain that separation so we

could fulfill our mission to the other nations, contends the *Birkat Mordechai*. How can we do that? We must keep away from activities and objects from foreign cultures that would make Hashem "uncomfortable" in our homes. As Rabbi Pincus writes, it is up to us to fill our homes with holiness.

Rabbi Scheinerman notes that gentiles often fill their free time with fun and games. In contrast, the Jew has no free time. When he finishes his work, he learns Torah or involves himself in *chessed*. A Jew's "down time" is Shabbat and *Yom Tov*, when time itself is sanctified through *Kiddush*, *zemirot* and learning Torah, when our physical lives are elevated to a level of service to Hashem.

Others also have the potential for spiritual greatness. Nevuchadnetzar himself sang a magnificent ode that rivaled the Psalms that Chanaya, Mishael and Azarya sang when they were released from the fiery furnace. However, despite his great potential, he was never able to cross over and accept the sovereignty of the King of kings, writes the Chatam Sofer. On that level, his spirituality revolved around himself, not around Hashem. Had he put his ego aside, he would not have continued to commit the atrocities he did.

Rabbi Orloweck writes that while emotion may spur us to action, one must control that emotion with the intellect, developing a strong inner reality that will enable us to focus our actions toward appropriate goals. This is why Hashem chose Avraham Avinu for this exalted mission. While other descendants of Shem remained in their *yeshiva* and waited for others to come to them, Avraham went out into the world, interacted with others, and brought mankind closer to Hashem.

Mesilat Yesharim – G-d's Servant – Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

The Mesilat Yesharim discusses the important trait of being an *Eved Hashem*. This is the greatest title one can call a Jew and Hashem called Moshe Rabbeinu an *eved Hashem*. Moshe was not praised for his prowess in learning or his righteousness, but for his profound humility as the verse says, “*V’ha’ish Moshe anav me’od m’kol adam.*”

We are enjoined to imitate Hashem by doing acts of kindness and by being humble. The Torah begins and ends with *chesed*. We read how Hashem clothed Adam and Chava and how He buried Moshe. So too we imitate Hashem by doing acts of kindness. In Bereishit we read how Hashem told the angels, “*Naaseh adam*. Let us make man.” *Naaseh* is in the plural form. Rashi comments that this teaches us about Hashem’s humility. The angels were envious that Hashem was creating the lower world, so He humbly asked their advice. The creation of man begins with the middah of humility to show us that it

overrides everything.

The Gemara in Megilah teaches that wherever one sees the greatness of Hashem in *Tanach* one also sees His modesty. The greater the person the greater his humility should be. *Anavah* is the first and very important foundation.

In the famous letter the Ramban wrote to his son, he stressed that Hashem wants our *yirat shamayim*. “*Eikev anava yirat Hashem.*” *Yirat Hashem* means nullifying the I. Then one becomes capable of seeing Hashem. The Ramchal writes that *anivut* can be manifested through thought and action. *Anavah b’machsavah* means thinking, “I don’t deserve this praise. I have shortcomings so how can I think I’m so great? That which I have I don’t deserve. It’s all *Chasdei Hashem*. Everything belongs to Him.” The great sages knew they had prolific minds yet they remained humble, recognizing *Ki lekach nozarti.*” Hashem made

me this way.

How was Moshe able to write the words, “*V’ha’ish Moshe hayah anav meod?*” The Lubliner Rav explains that the *Shechina* speaks through the voice of man. Moshe gave over the words that came to him from Hashem. The definition of a true *anav* is recognizing that whatever strengths one has is from Hashem. Once a person realizes that, the only concern should be fulfilling Hashem’s will. Chazal tell us someone who is a *shafel*, who nullifies himself to fulfill the word of Hashem, is as if he brings all the sacrifices. “*Zivchei Elokim ruach nishbara.*” Hashem desires a broken heart and waits for our return.

Make It Count 25

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shoshie Nissenabum

The 25th day of the Omer is *Netzach sheb’Netzach*, an indomitable, unstoppable force. This is the power of Rabbi Akiva. It is the urge to accomplish great things despite obstacles and setbacks. It’s not just the actual achievement but the ambition, the will, and the motivation behind it. On the one hand *Netzach sheb’Netzach* calls to action. On the other hand, it is humbling. It makes one cognizant that every action is a gift from Hashem. It is having faith in the eternity of Hashem and that He is the true *menatzeach*, conductor of the world. Nothing happens without Hashem making it possible. All our successes and victories belong to Him. *Netzach sheb’Netzach* empowers us to strive further in our *Avodat Hashem* and to

transcend challenges with faith.

No one personified this as much as Rabbi Akiva, who experienced numerous setbacks and failures. His mantra was, “*V’ahavta l’rei’acha kamocho*. Love your neighbor as yourself.” Yet his 24,000 students died because they lacked respect for each other. Rabbi Akiva didn’t see this as an insurmountable obstacle, but as an opportunity to start again. His quest to accomplish more and his strong desire to connect to the eternity of Hashem and his Torah drove him to achieve when others would have given up. He did not question how he would find new students. He did not doubt himself although all of his previous students had died, although he had

only begun learning at the age of 40, although he was the son of converts. Nothing stopped Rabbi Akiva. This is the power of *Netzach sheb’Netzach*. It empowers us to achieve and to become great. We have to look at ourselves and others this way in the spirit of true *Ahavat Yisrael*. Just as you believe deep down that one day you will accomplish and achieve great things, believe this about other people too.

On this day let’s create a mission statement of our soul. Let’s visualize our ambitions and let’s turn each one into a prayer. Let us plead that Hashem help us develop our *Netzach sheb’Netzach* so that we can come to actualize our true desires.